

## AN EPISODE IN THE HISTORY OF BUDDHISM IN SOUTH INDIA

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Since my last attempt to trace the outline of the history of Buddhism in South India<sup>1</sup>, I have had occasion to go further into the references to Buddhists and Buddhism in Tamil literature ; and I think it will be of some use to bring together the more important ones among these references here and also to consider in some detail what appears to have been one of the historic episodes in the repeated contests between Śaivism and Buddhism in the south, to which I made a brief reference in the paper just mentioned.

Working with imperfect indexes as they now turn out to be, I permitted myself to make the statement 'that only Jñānasambandar and Tirumangai seem to mention them (Buddhists) particularly and their dress and habits in their verses'.<sup>2</sup> This is clearly wrong and there are found equally clear and definite references to Buddhists and their practices and doctrines, of course always with a sneer, in the hymns of Appar and Sundaramūrtti and in some of the ālvārs besides Tirumangai. Appar is well known as the senior contemporary of Jñānasambandar, and both have been assigned on very proper grounds to the seventh century A.D. Sundaramūrtti came about a century or more later.

The position of Māṇikkavāṣagar, the other great protagonist of Śaivism most celebrated in legend as the opponent of Buddhism, is unfortunately not yet satisfactorily settled ; whether he preceded the other saints or came after them is still a subject of debate, and I will not enter into this vexed question here, but merely refer the reader to my *Pāṇḍyan Kingdom* where I have summed up the main arguments on either side. The disputation that took place at Chidambaram between Māṇikkavāṣagar and the Buddhists from Ceylon and the legends that have gathered round it have been discussed fully by G. U. Pope in his superb edition of the *Tiruvāṣagam*, and there is no need to reproduce the story now. But it is perhaps worth noting that the episode is briefly mentioned in a verse in the *Tiruvilaiyāḍal-Purāṇam* (The Purāṇa of Sacred Sports) by Vēmbarrūrar *alias* Perumbarrappuliyūr Nambi (ch. 30 v. 51) ; it does not in any sense differ from the legends reviewed by Pope and is of interest as being perhaps the earliest extant literary

1. *The Maha-bodhi* Vol. 50, Apl.-June, 1942, pp. 157-67.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

reference to the story of the dispute. The *Periya Purāṇam* of Śēkkiḷār does not mention either Māṇikkavāṣagar or his disputation with the Buddhists. This omission by Śēkkiḷār who follows the tradition coming down from Sundaramūrtti is one of the strongest arguments for Māṇikkavāṣagar being assigned to a date after the time of Sundaramūrtti, the last of the three saints whose hymns together constitute the sacred collection known as the *Dēvāram* (The Divine Garland). The story that the Buddhists with whom Māṇikkavāṣagar had his disputation came from Ceylon may also be taken to point in the same direction; for there was no dearth of Buddhists and Buddhist institutions in South India in the seventh century A.D. as may be seen from Hiuen-Tsang's account of Drāviḍa and Malakūṭa and also from the episode in Jñānasambandar's life to be discussed presently in some detail. This consideration is, however, by no means conclusive. For the only legitimate conclusion that can be drawn from it is that Māṇikkavāṣagar did not belong to the same age as the hymnists of the *Dēvāram*; he might have lived before or after their time, and those who stand for an early date for Māṇikkavāṣagar may argue that as Buddhists continued to flourish in South India up to the fourteenth century A.D. after the coming of Buddhism, Māṇikkavāṣagar must be taken to have preceded that age and followed that of the Śāṅgam poets who know only of Vedic religion and indigenous cults, but nothing of Buddhism or Jainism. We should not also lose sight of Aśoka's claim to have sent missionaries of the faith to South India to preach the Dhamma there, though of the practical results of these missions we have no definite knowledge.

Appar makes several references to Buddhists<sup>3</sup> but two of them deserve particular notice as in both they are mentioned along with the Jainas and another sect called Kuṇḍar. In the hymn on Tirutturutti (IV. 42) we read in v. 9 :

Kuṇḍarē Śamaṇar Buddhar kuṇḍariyādu ninṇu  
kaṇḍadē karuduvārgaḷ karuttenṇādoliṃin nīrgaḷ

i.e. have no regard for the faith of the ignorant Kuṇḍas, Jainas and Baudhas who take account only of what they see,—a dig at the philosophical position of the sects which accept only pratyakṣa (with anumāna) as pramāṇa. Again in the hymn on Tirunāgai-kārōṇam (VI. 22) we have in v. 10 :

manaituṇḍa vallamaṇar tangaḷ poyyum  
māṇburaikkum manakkunḍar tangaḷ poyyum  
śinai podinda cīvarattar tangaḷ poyyum  
meyyenṇu karudādē pōda neṇjē,—

i.e. 'O intelligent mind, do not take for truth the falsehood of the hardy

3. See pp. 61, 67, 144, 212, 228, 233, 248, 254, 269, 316, 317 and 359 of the Śaiva Siddhānta-mahāsamājam edition, (1941).

Jainas who have abandoned their homes, or the falsehood of the boastful-minded Kuṇḍar, or the falsehood of those (Buddhists) who cover their limbs with cīvara (monk's robes)'.

Now who are the Kuṇḍar who seem to figure as a third sect by the side of the Jainas and the Buddhists in both these passages? I am not able to answer this question with any confidence. One suggestion that occurred to my friend Mr. Vaiyapuri Pillai, Reader in Tamil (Madras), with whom I discussed this question may be mentioned here though no finality can attach to it until manuscript authority is forthcoming in support. It is this. In the first two lines of the last citation given above from Appar, it seems probable that the amanar who renounced family life are contrasted with kuṇḍar who hang on to it, and if this surmise is accepted a slight emendation of the text will be seen to support the view;—instead of *manakkunḍar* we have only to read *manaik-kunḍar*, (kuṇḍar living in their own homes), and the phrase will be a perfect contrast to *manai-tuṇḍa amanar* of the preceding line. The Kuṇḍar would be the laity among the Jainas. And this seems to get some support from the phrase once employed by Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi (end of tenth century A.D.) in whose works there are found frequent references to the Kuṇḍar. That phrase is *amanāna van kuṇḍar*<sup>4</sup> i.e. the strong Kuṇḍar, who are Jainas, which shows that the Kuṇḍas were a section among them. But one is not sure how far Nambi who came long after Appar's date may be taken to represent the correct position regarding these sects and sub-sects.\* And to make matters worse, there is another text of the same author in his *Tiruvandādi* (v. 28) which reads: *uṟi-kaip-paritalaik-kunḍar* i.e. the Kuṇḍar with slings in hand and heads made bald by the hair being plucked,—showing thus that Kuṇḍar are here identified with Jaina monks. But if the Kuṇḍar were identical with Jaina ascetics, it is very difficult to account for the way in which Appar mentions them separately from the śamaṇas in the passages cited above.

There is one other reference to Kuṇḍar, and this is from Jñānasambandar, which seems to suggest that Kuṇḍar were the Jainas who wore robes as opposed to those who did not. It occurs in the hymn on Kīlāit-Tiruk-kāṭṭup-palli (T, 5, 10) :

oṇ-tuvar-ār tugil-āḍai mey-pōrttucci-koḷāmai-yuṇḍē-yuraikkun  
kuṇḍargaḷōḍ-araik-kūraiyaillār kūruvadāṅṇamalla kaṇḍir

i.e. 'Know ye that there is no good in the words of those who have no clothes on their waists and of the Kuṇḍar who cover their bodies with clothes coloured with bright red ochre, and eat their meal in the forenoon.' Here Kuṇḍar are said to cover themselves with red robes unlike the naked Jainas; the śvetāmbara Jain monks though their name means 'white-robed' are seen

4. *Āḷuḍaiya Piḷḷaiyār Tirukkalambakam*, v. 8.



today wearing the orange-coloured robes used by monks of other persuasions ; and if this practice may be assumed to have prevailed in the days of Sambandar, this passage should be taken to mention two schools of Jainas ; otherwise the kuṇḍar of this text must be taken to be Buddhists. One explanation of the word Kuṇḍar I have heard may also be noted here. Kuṇḍu means a depth or hollow ; and hence Kuṇḍan means a man of low character, a heretic. But this explanation of the term as a word of abuse which seems to be followed in Tamil Lexicon also does not by any means constitute a satisfactory account of the question raised by the references cited above about Kuṇḍar. This discussion which has to be left in this unsatisfactory state shows how little we know definitely, and even Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi knew, of the details of sectarian history which loomed large in the eyes of contemporaries.

Departing a little from the chronological order, we shall take up the references to Buddhists in Sundaramūrtti next. There are quite a number of such references<sup>5</sup> in which they are called Thērar, Śākkiyar and so on, but only one of them is of sufficient general interest for being noticed here. In v. 10 in the *Dēvāram* on Tiru-vālkoḷi-puttūr we have the phrase : *irunduṇ tērarum ninṇuṇ Śamaṇum* i.e. the Buddhas who eat their meal seated and the Jainas who do so standing. This distinction between the adherents of the two faiths known to the Tamil Śaiva canon, does not seem to occur anywhere else ; and being unable to say how far this distinction is true to facts, and if so, what the point of the contrast is, I must leave these things to be explained by scholars who have better knowledge of the subject.

Before leaving Sundaramūrtti I should like to cite one verse from him which, though it does not bear on the Buddhists but relates to the Jainas, is still of great general interest as an index to the attitude of intense hostility to the heretical sects, taken up by the Śaiva saints of the day. The very presence of the vihāras and paḷḷis, some of which are known to have been in a very flourishing condition, was an irritation to the Śaivas, and the following verse is strongly reminiscent of the things they saw and heard and did not like. The verse is No. 9 in the hymn called Namakkaḍigal-āgiya adigaḷ i.e. The God who is our Lord. It reads :

Namaṇanandiyuṇ-Karumavīranun-Darumasēnanum eṇṇivar  
Kumaṇa-māmalaik-kunṇupōl-ninṇu tangal kūṇṇaiyōṇṇiṇṇiyē  
Nāmaṇa-nāṇaṇa-nāṇa-nōṇam-eṇṇōdi-yāraiyaṇ nāṇalā  
amaṇarār-paḷippuḍaiyarō namakkaḍigal-āgiya-vaḍigalē

i.e. 'Is our Lord God to be touched by reproaches from these Jainas who are lost to all sense of shame, viz., Namaṇanandi, Karumavīra, Darumasēna and the rest of them, who stand erect with no clothes on their bodies like

5. pp. 17, 71, 111, 114, 134, 268 of the Śaivasiddhānta Mahāsamājam edition (1935).

some foul smelling hillock and mutter (unmeaning formulae sounding like) *ñāmaṇa-ñāṇaṇa-ñāṇa-ñōṇam* ? This precious verse is a concentrated expression of the intolerance of the age which forms the subject of this paper, an age which offers one of the few striking exceptions to the easy-going tolerance bordering on indifference that has been the general rule through the ages in all India. But the Jains and Buddhists seem to have risen equal to the occasion and in their turn reciprocated the hatred directed towards them. Sambandar refers to the Jains' intolerance of Śaivas in rather strong terms ; in III 108, v. 8 (Madura) he says :

*nūru mēniyarāyinar mēluṟra*

*kāṟruk-kollavum nillā amaṇar*

i.e. the Jains who would not even stand in the direction of the wind that has touched the bodies of persons wearing the holy ashes (Śaivas).

Jñānasambandar was indeed the purest and the greatest of the *Dēva*-ram trio. Unlike his elder contemporary Appar, he was no Jain turned Śaiva, and had no past to look back on with remorse. Unlike Sundaramūrtti whose youth was dazzled by the full lustre of woman's love and whose love affairs on occasions entangled even the deity he worshipped, Jñānasambandar was the joyous recipient of the highest knowledge while yet he was but a child, and an utter stranger to sex life. Sambandar has been best known to legend and history as the opponent of Jainism, and the scene of his most remarkable achievements against that religion was the court of the Pāṇḍyan ruler of Madura on the banks of the Vaigai river. On his return to the Cōla country after his victory against the Jainas, he had to meet and overcome the opposition of Buddhists, and this episode in Sambandar's life is not so well known as his great encounter with the Jains of the Pāṇḍyan kingdom.

The references to Buddhists in Sambandar's hymns are numerous, and he speaks of their dress, mode of life, and their doctrines, of their denial of the authority of the Veda and the efficacy of sacrifice, and of their allegiance to the Bodhi tree and the Tripiṭaka. All these references have been collected and carefully indexed together with those on the Jains by my friend, Mr. Balasubramania Mudaliyar<sup>6</sup>, and there is no need to cite these texts here. We may therefore turn to a consideration of Sambandar's contest with the Buddhists in some detail.

Before we enter on this task, some indication may be given of the sources of our knowledge of the incident and their relative importance. Sundaramūrtti's celebrated hymn known as *Tiruttonḍat-togai*, (Groups of Sacred Devotees) is the starting point of the hagiology of Tamil Śaivism ;

6. pp. 60-66 of the Śaiva Siddhānta Mahāsamājam edition of Sambandar's *Devaram* (1937). This index appears in the second edition and not in the first, but even the second edition has gone out of print, and it is to be hoped that it will be reprinted when conditions allow of its being done.

by its nature it is nothing more than an almost bare mention of the names of the devotees with no details whatever of their lives and achievements, which, however, must have been matters of common knowledge among the votaries of Śaivism when the hymn was composed. The traditions are recorded in a little more detail some two centuries later by Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi in his *Tiruttonḍar-tiruvandādi* and other works, some of which will be mentioned presently. Nambi then marks the second stage in the literary tradition, when we are vouchsafed some details of the ancient oral tradition. The third and definitive stage, in this development is reached in Śēkkiḷār's *Tiruttonḍar-purāṇam* also known as *Periya-purāṇam*, twelfth century. The nature of this great work and the circumstances of its composition have been outlined by me in the chapter on Literature in my work *The Cōlas* and need not be reproduced here ; we may note, however, that in this extensive purāṇa which has found a place in the Śaiva canon from the date of its composition, we have the most complete record of the traditional lives of the Saints of Śaivism. Being the work of a devout believer in the faith, we find miracles recorded in it side by side with the commonplace occurrences of every day life with equal seriousness and good faith. I have thought it best to let such a work speak for itself, and hence, all the verses in which Śēkkiḷār has described Sambandar's contest with the Buddhists are presented here in translation, and a few comments offered to enable the reader to follow the narrative with ease.

The translation of the thirty odd verses of Śēkkiḷār has been found by no means an easy job ; the diction is prolix and often obscure ; and the translation now offered might never have been made but for the alacrity with which my friend, Mr. P. N. Appuswami undertook to make a draft translation which could be treated as I liked after it was placed in my hands ; and I am very grateful to him for his generous aid. The draft was checked and revised with all possible care with the assistance of Mr. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai given with equal readiness. But under the circumstances I have stated no responsibility should attach to my collaborators for any shortcomings readers may discover but only for the merits in it, if any.

Let us now turn to the story of the disputation between Sambandar and the Buddhists. The account of Sambandar's life in Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi's *Tiruttonḍar Tiruvandādi* does not contain any reference to this incident. But in his other works on the life of the Saint which are no fewer than six in number<sup>7</sup> Nambi repeatedly uses expressions which are clear re-

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7. Āluḍaiya Pillaiyār Tiruvandādi.  
 Āluḍaiya Pillaiyār Tiruccanbai Viruttam.  
 Āluḍaiya Pillaiyār Tirumummanikkōvai.  
 Āluḍaiya Pillaiyār Tiruvulāmālai.  
 Āluḍaiya Pillaiyār Tirukkalambagam.  
 Āluḍaiya Pillaiyār Tiruttogai.



ferences to this disputation, and once refers to an incident in the encounter which figures again with some variations in the longer account of Śēkkiḷār's purāṇam. Nambi repeatedly applies to Sambandar terms like : *para-mata-kōḷari* (Lion to enemy faiths), *aruhāṣani* (thunderbolt to the Arhats), *Kuṇḍāṣani* (thunderbolt to the Kuṇḍas), and so on. The specific and unmistakable reference to an incident in the dispute with the Buddhists occurs in *Aḷudaiya-Piḷḷaiyār Tiruttogai*, ll. 19-21 which read :

nēr vanda  
puttan talaiyaip-puvimēr puraḷuvitta  
vittagap-pāḍal viḷambinān,

i.e. he uttered the magic song which caused the head of the opposing Buddhist to roll on the ground. Judging from this cryptic reference, Sambandar must be taken to have composed and recited some song in the course of his disputation with his Buddhist opponent, and as a result the opponent's head was severed from the body and rolled on the ground. We shall see from what follows, that this miracle is attributed by Śēkkiḷār, not to Sambandar himself, as Nambi does, but to a devotee of his who, after demonstrating his superiority against one set of opponents by this miracle, met a second party of Buddhists under another leader and had a long-drawn logical argument with them which is reviewed at some length by Śēkkiḷār and as a result of which the Buddhists acknowledged the superiority of Śaivism and turned Śaivas.

We shall now trace the story in the words of Śēkkiḷār,—(the numbers within the brackets are those of the verses in the *Sambandar Purāṇam*).

896. "Followed by a great concourse of holy servants of the Lord, peerless in their goodness, he, on whose chest lay the triple thread, came to the land made fertile by the Kāverī. Adored by devotees and citizens, he visited every temple dedicated to Him who wears snakes as ornaments. He offered worship at Tirukkāḷar, the city of maiden ramparts ; and sang of Pātāḷiccam which belongs to Him, whose throat is adorned by the black stain ; and bowing down he offered worship to all other cities *en route*, and reached Muḷlivāykkarai.

897. "Carrying the sandal, the eaglewood, and the teak which grew upon the hills, and bearing mountainous piles of bowers which bees hummed around, and rising to a great height, the river became so swollen by the flood, and the waves rose so high, that men dared not cross it. Because the barge-pole thrust against the river bed could not strike bottom, the boatmen of the river left the boat deserted on the shore. That noble of Kaṇṇiya clan versed in the arts saw it there, and came to that shore gracing it with his presence. While he stood thus,

898. "He saw on the opposite shore Tirukoḷḷampūtūr where resided the Lord of the gods. His pure heart yearned to go thither and bow down

in worship. Since the shore was deserted with none to ferry the boat across, the chieftain of Śaṅbai, with eager haste untied the boat, and got the servants of the Lord on board, and with the might of his tongue for a barge-pole, he stood upon the deck, and with feeling sang of the Lord the hymn beginning 'koṭṭam' (Costus root).

899. "By the grace of Him, who drank the poison in order that the gods may live, the boat was propelled on and on, and moved across the river and reached Koḷḷampūtūr, the city of the Lord whose looks are like red gold. When the boat had reached the other shore, he, who in his infancy was on Knowledge fed, alighted with the faithful servants of the Lord to bow down to Lord Śiva, and with delight walked up to the gates of the temple of Him who is fond of fresh blossoms of fragrant Konrai, (Indian laburnum)."

This miraculous crossing of the stream from Muḷlivāykkarai to Koḷḷampūtūr on the opposite shore is mentioned a number of times by Nambi-Āṇḍār Nambi in his works on Sambandar to which reference has been made above. To continue Śākkilār's narration :

900. "He prostrated in worship in front of the lofty upstanding tower, and entering with the crowd of the peerless servants of the Lord, he circumambulated the temple which shone bright. He stood with head bowed down in the sacred presence of the moon-crested Lord and reverently extolled Him thus : 'O Immutable One, O Lord who shewedst me Thy grace by propelling the boat upon the river ! O Thou who wearest snakes for jewels ! O Three-eyed one and pure, who wearest as a shawl the flayed skin of the elephant !'

901. "In the days when he dwelt there, ever coming out of the temple after singing paeons of praise, he desired to prostrate in worship before the Lord whose hymnal decades were unconsumed by fire at the disputation with the heretical Jains held in the presence of the Pāṇḍya. Obtaining His grace in abundant measure, he departed thence, and prostrating in worship before the cities he had visited earlier, surrounded by those who love the Lord, he reached Tirunallāru praised of the four quarters, and went to the temple of the Lord of the land.

902. "There, while the ever holy servants of the Lord surrounded him on all sides, he descended from the pearl palanquin, and bowing before the glorious and holy gates, entered in. He went round the temple of the Lord who on His crest wears the moon, and approaching nigh with delight in his heart, and clasping in worship his flower-soft hands, he prostrated before Him and in praise of the gracious Lord sang the hymn beginning '*Pāḍaga mellaḍi*' (The soft ankled foot) with tears streaming from his eyes.

903. "At the disputation which the Jains held in the presence of the



Pāṇḍya, Thou didst preserve the freshness of the palm-leaves thrown into the fire. Thou abidest as a friend within my heart and yet Thou dwellest in Ālavāy too.—How is all this, O my Father?'. Thus praising Him again and again, and laying on Him a garland of Tamil song, he dwelt there with the sweet-natured servants of the Lord. And then bowing down in worship to Naḷḷāru, the chief of Śaṇbai went forth for worship in the other cities.

904. "Then he went to Tirutteliccēri glistening in splendour, and after praising the Lord Śiva, he reached Bōdimaṅgai where lived the Śākkiyas ignorant of the true faith. Knowing this full well the Śaivas (followers of Sambandar) sounded their conches and brass trumpets and many other musical instruments and raised a din like unto a surging sea: and they blew shrill clarions at whose sound the earth rejoiced; and upon pipes too they blew, to proclaim, 'He has come—he who is like a devouring lion to the other faiths'."

Bōdimaṅgai was a Bauddha settlement on the way from Teliccēri to Tirukkaḍavūr. It may be the same as Bōdimaṅgalam, a hamlet of Tiruvīdaikkaḷi in the Mayavaram Taluk: Buddha images have been recovered from this neighbourhood in recent years.<sup>8</sup> But we may note here that Bōdimaṅgai was an exclusive colony of Buddhists, and because of this the Śaiva followers of Sambandar deliberately draw the attention of the residents of Bōdimaṅgai to the presence of the Śaiva saint by the noises they make, and thus challenge them to a contest. This challenge to what was apparently a strong centre of Buddhism in the Tamil country in those days, could not well be ignored by the Bauddhas. We should remember that the whole of this account comes to us from the side of the victors in the contest which followed; but if we allow for the natural likes and dislikes of the author of the account, the substratum of truth is not very hard to get at. Let us see how the Buddhists reacted to the challenge.

905. "When the mean-minded Śākkiyas learnt of his arrival, they gathered together, and being greatly bewildered by the envy provoked in their hearts by the noisy shouts of the servants of the Lord and by the swelling sounds of the trumpets which went forth to welcome the Lord of Pugali, when he came and graciously entered upon their outskirts, they went to their Buddha-Nandi and to the other learned Theras and angrily informed them (of this).

906. "When their hot and angry words, and the rising sound of the trumpets blown in front of the Divine Child, and the loud and joyous shouts of the servants of the Lord thronging there entered his ears like a barbed arrow, a great hatred swelled up in Buddha-Nandi's heart. He rose in anger,

8. 276 of 1925; A. R. A. 1912-13, p. 75, I owe these reference to Mr. K. R. Venkatarama Aiyar of Pudukottah.

and going forth with a congregation of Theras around him, angrily spoke thus : " Is it not seemly that you should blow upon the trumpets of victory only after defeating us in disputation ? "

Evidently there was a vihāra in Bōdimāṅgai with many learned theras in it and a number of other monks not so learned. In the first stage of the contest, Buddha-Nandi figures as the leader on the Buddhist side, and takes up the challenge. He offers to meet the Śaivas in a disputation and stops their noises as unseemly in persons who have as yet no victory of their own to celebrate. This irritates the Śaivas and they report the occurrence to Sambandar.

907. " When Buddha-Nandi, surrounded by groups of Buddhists on all sides, forbade the blowing of the truly victorious trumpets in the gracious presence of that incomparably wise and holy man, the Lord's devotees rose up in indignation, and glared in anger, thinking ' If we should forbear and do not cut them down for this act of theirs, the heretics' position will become strong ' ; they approached him who sat like a jewel upon the palanquin set with rows of pearls, and making due obeisance, told him of the occurrence and stood waiting.

908. " ' Truly this is a strange welcome in the place we are visiting ! When their doctrines are set forth in argument in a definitive manner by Buddha-Nandi we shall know the falsity of his propositions ' said the chief of Pugali. But the devotee, who wrote down the noble hymnal decads as they were uttered, cried out in impatience ' By the might of the holy word of Sambandar, let the thunderbolt fall with a roar and knock the head of the Bauddha off and roll it down '.

909. " Like the omnipotent mantra which, like a thunderbolt, destroys all obstacles to the spread of the commandments enjoined for those of the faith of the Lord of the bull-banner, these words uttered by that holy truthful servant of the Lord sundered and blew into fragments the head and trunk of the Buddhist who came seeking victory in wordy disputation. Thereat the gathering of the Buddhists was thrown into utter confusion, and being thoroughly frightened, it fled precipitately.

910. " When those servants of Hara saw the plight of the Buddhists, and saw the devotee with words as weapons cut asunder the head of trunk of Buddha-Nandi who had come seeking wordy disputation, they went and humbly informed the Divine Child who gave them victory. He replied ' That which has happened to remove the obstacle in our way is pre-ordained by fate. So shout you all ' Hara ' , whereupon their shouts reached up to heaven."

This is the first stage. Sambandar is patient and offers to meet Buddha-Nandi when he has stated his doctrines ; but a devotee of his is im-

patient, he utters a curse against Buddha-Nandi, and that acts immediately ; Buddha-Nandi dies, and there is confusion in the Buddhist camp. Sambandar for his part, when he sees what has happened, more or less ratifies the action of his devotee on the score of predestination. We have seen that in Nambi's account, the loss of the Bauddha's life was brought about by a song of Sambandar himself ; Śēkkiḷār evidently felt that such a method of controversy should not be attributed to the great saint and modified the story. Nambi's account knows nothing of what follows ; but he did not set out like Śēkkiḷār to give a full-fledged biography of the saint. Their first shock of surprise over, the Buddhists rallied again under the leadership of Sāriputta, an eminent divine learned in the *piṭakas*, and he began, under proper safeguards against magic and trickery, a disputation also with the devotee of Sambandar who had caused the death of Buddha-Nandi. Here is Śēkkiḷār's summary of the arguments urged on both sides :

911. "All those Buddhists who in fright had fled afar were wonder-struck, but soon they gathered again and thought in their bewilderment 'Is this trickery or is this an instance of the might of their Śaiva truth?' They said 'Without resorting to downright sorcery, will you agree to meet us to discuss religious doctrines?' So saying, they came back with the eminent Sāriputta himself at their head.

912. "Graciously listening to their statement, the Victorious Lion of Śaṇbai felt in his heart 'This is well', and rejoicing greatly, he hurried forth. Descending from his palanquin of white pearl, he ascended the pillared hall of another choultry and was graciously seated among long rows of Śaivites. And then he said, 'Invite hither the Buddhists who have come'; whereupon those who stood in his gracious presence went forth bearing the commands of that chieftain of Pugali.

913. "Those who went out thus came to the congregation of Theras and said : 'That victorious and youthful tusker of ours, the Lord of Śaṇbai, who has sailed across the sea of Vedic Knowledge, and is a prince of proficient in the three branches of Tamil, is well pleased to invite you to speak out the doctrines of the creed which you have been proclaiming. So hurry up'. Thereupon Sāriputta accompanied by other heretical Buddhists of equal eminence came thither in front of the pillared hall of the choultry.

914. "When they reached there, the Divine Child stood in that pillared hall with the Buddhists close by his side. Then that incomparable friend, who blew up into fragments the big head of the Bauddha who forbade the blowing of the sacred trumpet, worshipped at the feet of the chieftain of Pugali whose renown is ever expanding ; and, by his gracious leave, he said to Sāriputta, 'Tell us who your Lord is and what your creed'. Then he too took up the challenge and said in reply :—



Note that in this account, Sambandar who is present throughout and whose permission is sought by the Śaivas for everything that they do, takes no direct part in the argumentation and leaves this to his favourite disciple, who starts by asking Sāriputta to state his creed. Sāriputta's answer follows the usual Theravāda position regarding the Buddha, his Enlightenment and the nature of release.

915. " 'In all the Kalpas where everything is born, dies, and goes through many a transformation, and thus every moment is constantly undergoing a change, He performed well Charity which is glorious, Penance and Meditation which seeks to be alone, and thereby achieved the Eternal and heavenly Mukti, inseparable from Knowledge, which is spoken of in the Holy Books ; He who proclaimed the Dharma so that all diverse Beings may be saved and be redeemed—He is the supreme Lord whom we worship.'

916. "As Sāriputta spoke thus, that distinguished devotee who had performed severe penances, went up to him and said : 'Well, then, what is this Mukti of yours which you assert your Lord has achieved ?' Whereupon the Piṭaka-scholar replied, 'Constant Uruvam (Form) Vēdanai (feeling), Kuṛippu (Perception), Śeykai (latent tendencies to action) and the true Jñānam (Intellect) are the five elements which together form the skandha (body) ; their annihilation is Mukti' "

The objection raised by the Śaiva protagonist to this view is well known to have engaged Buddhist writers for long, and turns on the difficulty of reconciling the denial of the soul and the life after death postulated by the doctrine of Karma. It takes the form here of questioning the continued existence of the Buddha after his death and his capacity to receive and reward the worship offered to him by his devotees. As Keith has pointed out : <sup>9</sup> 'The problem of the continued existence of the Tathāgata after death is in the ultimate issue the same as the problem of the existence of a true self ; if such exists, then the enlightened one must necessarily, as the highest product of the world, be the possessor of such a self'.

The Buddha never answered these questions fully and relegated them to the region of indeterminates. But the relation of the disciple to the Buddha is of a very peculiar character, and does need quite a lot of explanation. It can be taken in fact, to be nothing more than the natural reverence inspired by the memory of a noble path-finder, and before proceeding to the details of the discussion that follow in Śēkṣiār's account, it may be useful for the reader to pursue the following summary by Keith of a discussion of the very problem debated here which occurs in the *Milindapañha* : 'A question of importance' says Keith<sup>10</sup>, 'is presented by the attitude of the

9. *Buddhist Philosophy*, pp. 61-2.

10. Keith, *op. cit.*, pp. 210-11.

*Milindapañha* to the difficult problem of the efficacy of gifts to the Buddha. The issue is clear; the Buddha is absolutely departed; neither in life, nor yet more in death can he accept gifts; if there be no recipient, how can homage to him avail? But Nāgasena insists on the merit of acts of homage and seeks to explain this quality by similes; if a great fire goes out, men kindle one for themselves; so men by erecting a shrine do homage to the supreme God under the form of the jewel treasure of his wisdom and win rebirth as a man, or god, as even release. Seed sown on the earth grows into trees, though the earth is unconscious. Diseases come to men without their consent from former evil deeds; hence, it follows that a good deed must bear fruit apart from consent, just as ill deeds done to a saint bring retribution without his desire'.

Another point that comes up for discussion between Sāriputta and the Śaiva protagonist is the omniscience of the Buddha; the Buddhist canon contains many passages which affirm the omniscience of the Buddha; but he does not reveal everything, but only 'what redounds to the benefit of man desirous of salvation, both as regards the past, the present and the future. He knows whatever throughout the world is discerned, striven for, accomplished, or devised, by gods or men; all that he spoke between his enlightenment and his passing away was true; as he does according to his word, and his word is according to his going, he is styled Tathagata.'<sup>11</sup> He is reticent on many issues 'not merely because knowledge of these matters does not tend to Nirvāṇa, but because men hold various opinions regarding them'.

After this somewhat lengthy explanation of the points at issue and the Buddhist position regarding them, the rest of Śēkṣiṭār's account may be given without further comment.

917. "The devotee who heard this speech, repeated his words and turning to him asked, 'If all the five skandhas including the supporting Jñāna be annihilated altogether, then how can you say 'The Lord is here', and build vihāras and fashion tall images of him for worship and celebrate festivals in his honour? Who is he that receives all this worship? Answer pray'. And he replied;

918. "'Freed from this Karmic body made up of the five skandhas, our Lord has become merged in Mukti'. Whereto the devotee said: 'The sensory organs namely the eye and others being absent, he could have no consciousness (at all)'; which he refuted saying 'Just as when a person is unconscious in sleep, those who abuse him and dance upon his person, do reap the fruits of their deeds, similarly may not Good result to those who offer reverent worship (to our Lord)?'

11. Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

919. "That devotee graciously listened to these words and said ; 'When he who receives continuously many an adoration, can neither accept it nor reject it, then, surely he cannot be said to have received it'. To which the other replies : 'When a person, neither accepting nor yet rejecting whatever is presented before him, is immersed in deep slumber,—if one should kill him in anger, would it not lead to loss of his sweet life and constitute murder? Even so will worship touch our Lord'.

920. "'Does it reach him thus !' exclaimed he. 'As in the case of the sleeping man of your analogy, you postulate that your Lord is possessed of all the organs of sense and of life. If so, then the annihilation of the five skandhas ceases to be true ; and it is clear that He could not have attained changeless Mukti. Further if, among the five skandhas Intellect (agivu) is destroyed, Bliss cannot be associated with Mukti'.

921. "When he heard this speech he had no answer ; and stood deeply concerned that even His Lord's mukti should have come to naught. While he stood thus, that devotee of him who was like the nectar of the ocean of Knowledge (Sambandar) faced him and said : 'You spoke an untruth when you said that he attained to Mukti. You said also that he long ago knew all things and proclaimed them long ago ; how could he have known everything? This too is an untruth. Still speak out, let us see.'

922. "'Knowledge is twofold, general and particular. The first is, to know that a thing is a tree ; to know which is which among the trees is knowledge of the particular kind. Thus also among all other things which are limitless. Whether you heap the faggots of wood you have gathered in a pile, or whether you place the hacked pieces separate, each distinct from the other, yet a consuming sprout of fire does seize upon them and burn them, even so does the Ancient One reveal everything both in the mass and in detail.'

923. "To the Bauddha, who set forth this argument, that devotee replied : 'You mentioned the fire as an analogy to Knowledge. Now, Knowledge has no form at all ; while the fire that you spoke of has a form, as you know. While your Lord, you say, can visualise not merely the present but also the past and future together, yet the raging fire can burn only what is put in it in the present, and cannot touch (anything) in the unseen times (Past and Future).

924. "'Therefore your statement that your Lord is omniscient fares exactly like your statement about his Mukti. And the precepts revealed through this Knowledge are faulty too'. Thus graciously did he tell him in an acceptable manner. Whereat the Bauddha, having no argument in reply, was defeated. Having thus graciously vanquished him, that devotee bowed down at the lotus-feet of the chieftain of Pugali : and all the Buddhists gave up their creed ; and humbly fell prostrate..



925. "When that devotee in his wisdom had shown by logical argument the untrue nature of the doctrines they held, he, who knew the substance of the glorious limitless Vedas and of the Āgamas, and of all the other arts, was graciously pleased to speak to the dull-witted (Bauddhas) saying 'Nothing is true but Śaivism'. Thereupon the Buddhists heartily accepted it, and approaching the holy Brahmin of Śaṅbai, laid themselves low at his feet.

926. "On that day the gracious look of the Prince of the Kaṁṇiya clan fell upon them; and so their ignorance disappeared. Then they humbly bowed down before him, and falling prostrate, got up again and became Śaivites. And everywhere flowers rained in torrents. The Prince of Śaṅbai then graciously revealed to them the truth, that all things stationary and moving are but manifestations of Śiva. Thereafter going forth thence to worship at the holy cities of Lord Śiva, he reached the outskirts of Tiruk-kaḍavūr."

Analogy fills an important role in this disputation as in that of Nāgasena in the *Milindapañha* summarised above; but the present account is that of a Śaiva writer meant to celebrate the victory of Śaivism; as often happens in history, we have only one side of the story before us. What the Bauddhas of South India felt and said on their side we have no means of knowing. We must also remember this—that as the account of Śēkkiḷār is separated by four to five centuries from the date of the occurrences it narrates and as oral tradition in such matters is apt to distort events considerably, all that we can take for certain is the general fact that Jñānasambandar upheld the cause of Śaivism not only as against the Jainas of the Pāṇḍya country, but as well against the Buddhists of the Cōḷa-rājya. We may also accept the presence of Theravāda Buddhists in considerable numbers in those days in South India, a fact even otherwise attested.

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